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them, full of prejudice, and even more ridiculous at times than the Philistines at whom he rails.

As "L'Œuvre" dealt chiefly with the art-world of Paris at a certain period of the Second Empire, it revived some of the passions which Zola had kindled by his championship of Manet. By certain painters the book was roundly abused when M. Charpentier published it early in 1886,¹ on the completion of the issue in the "Gil Bias." This time the demand was not great, for by its nature "L'Œuvre" appealed more particularly to a limited class of readers. Perhaps its sales would have been even smaller had not Zola woven into his narrative so much interesting information concerning himself in his earlier years.

No sooner was he delivered of this book than he turned to the novel on the French peasantry which had been in his mind at the beginning of 1884. Already at that time he had given it considerable thought, made notes, studied his subject in books and periodicals; and he now took up the work of preparation in real earnest. At the very outset he had decided to lay the scene in or near the great grain-producing region of La Beauce, in some degree because this would enable him to deal, *en passant*, with certain economic questions, such as the importation of American wheat, but

more particularly because both his mother and his grand-mother, Madame Aubert, had been Beauceronnes, and in his younger days he had often heard them talk of that part of the country, which presents various features of interest.

¹ " L'CEuvre," Paris, Charpentier, 1886, 18mo, 491 pages. Some copies on special papers. Fifty-fifth thousand in 1893 ; sixty-fourth thousand in 1903. Mr. Albert Vandam prepared an English adaptation of this story which was published serially in England, and afterwards acquired "by Yizetelly & Co. It formed the basis of their version, of the work.